

FWC Public Service Announcement Script

Chief Judge Introduction: Welcome to our joint jurisdiction family wellness court, we have been operating for about a year now but we are excited to share more information with you about what it is we're doing here. This family wellness court is important for us because we are taking steps to separate from typical western model dependency cases to incorporate traditional values and focus on helping heal our Hupa families in a good way. The family wellness court combines tribal and county resources to wrap services around families in crisis to help heal and restore family units, so we invite you to reach out to us if you or someone you know is involved with the child welfare system and want to participate in family wellness court. Please call Hoopa Valley Tribal Court or stop by, we're here to help.

Family Wellness Court Questions & Answers:

Question – Councilman Deacon Ferris: How is Family Wellness Court different than a regular dependency case?

Answer - Judge Elvine Kreis:

In Family Wellness Court we use a collaborative approach where there is a whole team of people who are helping with your case, they can be from different county or tribal departments, and family members or any other person who you would like to support you in family wellness court. You have contact with your whole team at least once a week, family wellness court hearings twice a month where you talk with the judges from tribal court and from state court, and in the weeks between you have family wellness team meetings. We are also informed by Hupa values, traditions and culture. We believe that recovery, healing and wellness is best achieved when it's done through a holistic approach where we focus on the family as a unit so they can help themselves and each other and are stronger together after, which will then make our community stronger as well.

Question – Damon Cross: What is the benefit to participating in FWC for families?

Answer - Judge Colegrove:

There is a lot of support offered in family wellness court, and it is really client driven so the team is there to help get you to your goals. In the beginning the family will create a wellness plan to set goals with the family wellness team, there are suggested timelines for family wellness court but it is not mandatory to keep those timelines so there is flexibility depending on the family and how they can handle reaching their goals. There are also the regular check ins with the judges in the hearing so they have current information on how you and your case is going. We also have many opportunities to integrate traditional healing and cultural practices into your family wellness plan.

Question – Merris Obie: Will I get my kids back faster?

Answer - Judge Elvine Kreis:

The goal of family wellness court is to have families reunified within 12 months of starting the family wellness court process, but it is not a guarantee that you will get your kids back faster. We want to make sure that parents have all the tools and skills they need to successfully reunify with their kids and keep it that way so we don't want to force a timeline that will be harmful for the family later. The intensity of the program and more frequent contact with participants naturally leads to faster reunification when participants are fully engaged.

Question – Councilman Ferris: Does the parent need to be living in Hoopa in order to participate?

Answer – Ashtyn Colegrove:

No, they do not need to be living in Hoopa in order to participate. We are a joint jurisdiction court so if you live in Eureka or the surrounding towns you can attend court and wellness team meetings in Eureka (when we are able to have court in person again).

Question – Damon Cross: Who is on the Family Wellness Court team?

Answer - Judge Ferris:

The family wellness team can be anyone who would help in your recovery and wellness journey. Currently we have tribal social workers and county social workers, mental health clinicians, case managers, K'ima:w behavioral health staff, two-feathers staff members, court staff members, and the judges from tribal court and Humboldt County Superior Court in addition to the participants. We can add family and community members to the team as well if the participants tell us who they would like to be a part of their wellness team. There is the possibility to add staff from other fields that would be helpful for the participants in their recovery and wellness journey as well.

Question – Boyd Ferris: How long is Family Wellness Court?

Answer – Ashtyn Colegrove:

Family wellness court is usually one to two years, but it is really family driven and we want to make sure they have all the tools to reunify and keep their kids without having to go through removal and the court process again so the timeline can be flexible if necessary to make sure they are ready.

Question – Merris Obie: How frequent are court hearings?

Answer – Scott Anderson:

We have court hearings two times each month on the first and third thursday. There are family wellness team meetings in the weeks in between court so you have constant contact and support from your wellness team.

Question – Councilman Ferris: Who decides if I can be in Family Wellness Court?

Answer – Ashtyn Colegrove:

If you want to join the family wellness court your attorney and the family wellness team can make recommendations but it is up to the team and the judges in the end.

Question – Damon Cross: How do I get into FWC/who do I call?

Answer – Ashtyn Colegrove:

Anyone can refer a family to the family wellness court, including yourself, by contacting child welfare services. Once the referral is made then the social worker will hold a team meeting with tribal and county social workers to decide if the family will benefit from family wellness court and recommend the family to the judges who have the final decision, the family can opt in to the family wellness court at the initial hearing. If you have an open case with child welfare services already then there is the option to transfer into family wellness court as well.

If you have questions about eligibility you can contact the court coordinators at tribal or county court as well who can help in starting the process of joining the family wellness court.

Question – Boyd Ferris: Do I have to do my treatment at a certain program?

Answer – Scott Anderson:

One of the first goals of family wellness court is recovery, but we don't specify where you have to do the treatment program just that you go and complete the program.

Question – Merris Obie: Is there a cultural requirement?

Answer - Judge Ferris:

There are several cultural components built into the wellness court program. These components include cultural activities and historical teachings that help our families on a mental, physical, and spiritual level to help them improve their lives. We ask that a brief cultural connection assessment be completed before you start the program so we can assess ways to help the family. We want everyone to be comfortable with the level of engagement they're willing to commit to.

Judge Colegrove: Jolene, as a very successful FWC participant, what do you think are some of the best things you experienced in the Court?

Jolene's Answer:

The best experience I had was seeing the teams motivation & the tremendous amount of empathy and support I received from them they helped me to believe in myself and not give up. Another great experience was when my Family was invited to participate in court with us in couldn't hold back the tears. The greatest experience was knowing that the teams was determined to bring my Daughter back home safely and they did I think that was the best experience we all shared. Today I am employed with the Hoopa Valley Tribe, I purchased a vehicle and I have stability to secure housing for me & my daughter because of the Because of the FWC. I'm proud to say that me and my daughter are learning, growing and healing together in a safe and healthy way we couldn't be any happier the best is still to come (Final Re-unification). Healing is everything.